

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4189

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 1445

E.O. 11652: GDY

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, SO, ET, FR

SUBJECT: DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE: GSDR WAITS AND WILL SEE

REF: ADDIS ABABA 10056

SUMMARY: WHILE GSDR WAS ELATED OVER DEPARTURE OF ALI AREF, IT REMAINS SUSPICIOUS OF FRENCH INTENTIONS, OPPOSED TO FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE AND CONCERNED, PERHAPS CONFUSED, OVER RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ISSA-DOMINATED AFRICAN PEOPLE'S INDEPENDENCE LEAGUE (LPAI), THE TERRITORY'S BEST-ORGANIZED POLITICAL GROUP. THE GSDR WILL PROBABLY NOT ATTEMPT TO PUSH THE PACE OF EVENTS IN THE TERRITORY. AFTER INDEPENDENCE, HOWEVER, SHOULD THE DOMESTIC SITUATION PERMIT, THE GSDR MIGHT WELL DECIDE THAT POLITICAL ACTION INCLUDING VIOLENCE IN DJIBOUTI IS BOTH WITHIN ITS CAPABILITIES AND IN ITS INTEREST. END SUMMARY.

1. WITH THE RESIGNATION OF ITS NEMESIS ALI AREF AND WITH THE TFAI ON A SLOW BUT WHAT SEEMS TO BE SURE COURSE TOWARD INDEPENDENCE, THE GSDR IS RELATIVELY RELAXED ON THE DJIBOUTI ISSUE AT PRESENT. NEWLY DESIGNATED TFAI PRESIDENT KAMIL SEEMS TO HAVE NOTHING BUT GOOD WORDS FOR HIS NEIGHBORS TO THE EAST AND, CONFIDENTIAL

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FROM THE GSDR SIDE, PRESIDENT SIAD WAS AMONG THE FIRST TO CON-

GRATULATE KAMIL ON HIS ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE.

2. NONETHELESS, THE GSDR RETAINS ITS DEEP SUSPICION OF THE FRENCH AND EVEN NOW PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT ONLY ITS VIGILANCE CAN THWART AN INEVITABLE FRENCH SCHEME TO DENY THE TFAI "COMPLETE" INDEPENDENCE. IN THIS REGARD, THE SOMALIS COULD NOT HAVE BEEN VERY HAPPY WITH KAMIL'S RECENT STATEMENT TO LE MONDE THAT FRENCH TROOPS COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO WITHDRAW FROM THE TERRITORY "OVERNIGHT." SIAD, IN FACT, TOLD LE MONDE'S PHILLIPPE DECRAENE IN EARLY AUGUST THAT A RESIDUAL FRENCH MILITARY PRESENCE AFTER INDEPENDENCE WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GSDR.

3. IT IS NOT CERTAIN, BUT LIKELY, THAT THE GSDR IS AS CONFUSED AS FOREIGN OBSERVERS ABOUT INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LPAI, THE TERRITORY'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL GROUP. THE SOMALIS WERE NOTICEABLY UPSET WHEN, IN LATE JUNE, LPAI PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED (AN ISSA) TRAVELED TO ADDIS ABABA AND HAD AN EVIDENTLY CORDIAL VISIT WITH THE ETHIOPIANS. THE

STATEMENT ISSUED AT THE END OF HIS STAY SUGGESTED THAT HE AND THE EPMG SAW EYE-TO-EYE ON THE GUT QUESTION OF TFAI INDEPENDENCE, SOVEREIGNTY AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. INCLUDED IN THE STATEMENT WAS A PASSAGE EXPRESSING HOPE THAT NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES WOULD RESPECT THE TERRITORY'S INDEPENDENCE AND THE INVIOABILITY OF ITS FRONTIERS, THINGS THAT ADDIS ABABA HAS REPEATEDLY PROMISED TO DO WHILE MOGADISCIO'S POSITION IN THIS REGARD IS STUDIOUSLY VAGUE.

4. OUR LOCAL SOURCES HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO TELL US WHAT HAPPENED NEXT, WHEN HASSAN CAME TO MOGADISCIO. THE PUBLIC RECORD SPEAKS ONLY OF BANQUETS AND MEETINGS FEATURING HASSAN, GSDR FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIALS AND LEADERS OF THE GSDR-CONTROLLED SOMALI COAST LIBERATION FRONT (FLCS). THE ONLY CONCESSION THAT HASSAN IS KNOWN TO HAVE MADE TO HIS HOSTS WAS A PROMISE TO INCLUDE FLCS REPRESENTATIVES IN ANY FUTURE TALKS WITH THE FRENCH CONCERNING INDEPENDENCE (THE FRONT WAS NOT INVITED TO THE TALKS IN PARIS LAST MAY).

5. WYUS, IT APPEARED THAT HASSAN WAS TAKING THE LPAI OUT OF
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THE SOMALI ORBIT WHEN, ENTER AHMED DINI, THE LPAI'S SECRETARY GENERAL AND AN AFAR. AHMED TOLD JEUNE AFRIQUE IN MID-JULY THAT STORIES OF A RIFT BETWEEN HASSAN AND HIM WERE NOT TRUE; THAT HASSAN REALIZED HE'D BEEN DUPED BY THE ETHIOPIANS INTO SIGNING THE JOINT STATEMENT IN JUNE; AND THAT ALL OF THE SEEMING INCONSISTENCIES IN THE LPAI STATEMENTS WOULD BE RECONCILED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. AHMED WENT ON TO MAKE THE RATHER STRANGE ASSERTION THAT HE, AN AFAR, FELT MORE AKIN TO THE SOMALIS

THAN DID HASSAN, AN ISSA, LEAVING IT TO THE READER TO GUESS WHERE HASSAN'S HEART MIGHT LIE (ETHIOPIA? FRANCE?). HASSAN HAS NOT YET COMMENTED ON AHMED'S INTERPRETATION OF EVENTS. IN ANY CASE, IT'S NOT CLEAR TO US WHO, IF ANYONE, IS RUNNING THE LPAI. NOR IS IT CLEAR WHAT BROUGHT ABOUT AHMED DINI'S ENAMORATION OF THE SOMALIS, THOUGH WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE AT THIS POINT THAT IT IS RELATED TO AHMED'S VISION OF HIMSELF AS AN AFAR LEADER, TIED NOT ONLY TO HIS TRIBESMEN IN DJIBOUTI BUT ALSO TO THOSE LIVING IN ETHIOPIA. HE MAY WELL BELIEVE THAT, IF HE CAN GARNER SOMALI SUPPORT FOR THE AFAR'S "LIBERATION" STRUGGLE AGAINST THE EPMG, IT WILL RAISE HIS POLITICAL STOCK AMONG ALL AFAR PEOPLES.

6. THE APPARENT DISARRAY IN THE LPAI NOTWITHSTANDING, THE GSDR SEEMS CONTENT TO LET EVENTS IN THE TFAI CONTINUE THEIR BASICALLY FAVORABLE DRIFT. THE HARSH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REALITIES OF PRESENT-DAY SOMALIA FURTHER UNDERSCORE THE PRUDENCE OF THIS POLICY. ALL OF THE OPTIONS OPEN TO THE GSDR NOW WILL BE OPEN LATER. WITH THE ECONOMY STILL REELING FROM THE DROUGHT AND WITH SIAD GRAPPLING TO GET HIS NEW PARTY OFF THE GROUND, NOW IS SIMPLY NOT THE TIME TO TAKE ON THE FRENCH OR ETHIOPIANS (OR BOTH) OPENLY. STILL, AS THE DUST BEGINS TO SETTLE IN POST-INDEPENDENCE DJIBOUTI, SIAD WILL HAVE AVAILABLE TO HIM THE TIME-PROVEN METHODS OF SUBVERSION, SABOTAGE AND TERRORISM THROUGH WHICH TO EXPLOIT ANY WEAKNESSES IN THE NEW REGIME. IF AND AS HIS DOMESTIC SITUATION IMPROVES, THE GSDR WILL BE MORE LIKELY TO EXERCISE THESE OPTIONS.

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